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**THE BROTHERS-IN-LAW:
A TALE OF THE EQUATORIAL
ISLANDS,
and THE BRASS GUN OF THE
BUCCANEERS**

From "The Tapu Of Banderah and Other Stories"

By Louis Becke

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THE BROTHERS-IN-LAW: A TALE OF THE EQUATORIAL ISLANDS

"There," said Tâvita the teacher, pointing with his paddle to a long, narrow peninsula which stretched out into the shallow waters of the lagoon, "there, that is the place where the battle was fought. In those days a village of thirty houses or more stood there; now no one liveth there, and only sometimes do the people come here to gather cocoanuts."

The White Man nodded. "'Tis a fair place to look upon. Let us land and rest awhile, for the sun is hot."

The native pastor swung the bow of the canoe round towards the shore, and presently the little craft glided gently upon the hard, white sand, and the two men got out, walked up to the grove of cocoa-palms, and sat down under their shade to rest and smoke until the sun lost some of its fierce intensity and they could proceed on their journey homeward to the principal village.

The White Man was the one trader living in Peru,{*} the native was a Samoan, and one of the oldest and bravest missionaries in the Pacific. For twenty years he had dwelt among the wild, intractable, and savage people of Peru—twenty years of almost daily peril, for in those days the warlike people of the Gilbert Group resented the coming of the few native teachers scattered throughout the archipelago, and only Tavita's undaunted courage and genial disposition had preserved the lives of himself and his family. Such influence as he now possessed was due, not to his persistent attempts to preach Christianity, but to his reputation for integrity of conduct and his skill as a fisherman and carpenter.

** Francis Island, or Peru, is one of the largest atolls of the Gilbert Group in the South Pacific, about one hundred and twenty miles south of the Equator*

The White Man and he were firm friends, and that day they had been down to the north end of the lagoon to collect a canoe load of the eggs of a small species of tern which frequented the uninhabited portion of the island in myriad swarms.

Presently, as they sat and smoked, and lazily watched a swarm of the silvery mullet called *kanae* disporting themselves on the glassy surface of the lagoon, the White Man said—

"Who were these white men, Tâvita, who fought in the battle?"

"Hast never heard the story?" inquired the teacher in Samoan.

The trader shook his head. "Only some of it—a little from one, a little from another."

"Then listen," said Tâvita, re-filling his pipe and leaning his broad back against the bole of a cocoa-palm.

"It was nineteen years ago, and I had been living on the island but a year. In those days there were many white men in these islands. Some were traders, some were but *papalagi tafea*{*} who spent their days in idleness, drunkenness, and debauchery, casting aside all pride and living like these savage people, with but a girdle of grass around their naked waists, their hands ever imbued in the blood of their fellow white men or that of the men of the land.

** Beachcombers.*

"Here, on this island, were two traders and many beachcombers. One of the traders was a man named Carter, the other was named West Carter the people called 'Karta,' the other by his fore name, which was 'Simi' (Jim). They came here together in a whaleship from the Bonin Islands with their wives—two sisters, who were Portuguese half-castes, and both very beautiful women. Carter's wife had no children; West, who was the younger man, and who had married the younger sister, had two. Both brought many thousands of dollars worth of trade with them to buy cocoanut oil, for in those days these natives here did not make copra as they do now—they made oil from the nuts.

"Karta built a house on the north end of the island, where there is the best anchorage for ships, West chose to remain on the lee side where he had landed, and bought a house near to mine. In quite a few days we became friends, and almost every night we would meet and talk, and his children and mine played together. He was quite a young man, and had been, he told me, the third mate of an English ship which was cast away on the Bonin Islands four years before, where he had met Karta, who was a trader there, and whose wife's sister he married.

"One day they heard from the captain of a whaleship that there was much money to be made on this island of Peru, for although there were many beachcombers living here there was no trader to whom the people could sell their oil. So that was why they came here.

"Now, although these two men were married to two sisters, there was but little love between them, and then as time went on came distrust, and then hatred, born out of Karta's jealousy and wicked heart; but until they came to live here on Peru there had been no bad blood—not even enough to cause a bitter word, though even then the younger man did not like Karta, who was a man of violent temper, unfaithful to his wife, and rude and insulting in his manner to most men, white or brown. And Serena, his wife, hated him, but made no sign.

"As time went on, both men prospered, for there was much oil to be had, and at the end of the first year a schooner came from Sydney and bought it I went on board with Simi, after the oil had been rafted off to the

ship's side. Karta, too, came on board to be paid for his oil. He had been drinking much grog and his face was flushed and angry. With him were three beachcombers whose foul language and insolent demeanour angered both the captain and Simi, who were quiet men. There were six or seven of these beachcombers living on the island, and they all disliked Simi, who would have none of their company; but in Karta's house they were made welcome. Night after night they would gather there and drink and gamble, for some of them had bags of dollars, for dissolute and idle as they were for the most of their time they could make money easily by acting as interpreters for the natives, to the captains of the whaleships, or as pilots to the trading vessels sailing northward to the Marshall Islands.

"The captain paid Simi partly in money and partly in trade goods, for the two hundred casks of oil he bought, and then Simi and I turned to go on shore. Karta had scarce spoken ten words to Simi, who yet bore him no ill-will, although for many months tales had come to us of the evil life he led and the insults he put upon his wife Serena.

"But after he had bidden farewell to the captain, Simi held out his hand to his brother-in-law and said—'My wife Luisa sendeth love and greetings to Serena. Is she in good health?'

"Karta would not take the hand held out to him.

"'What is that to thee or thy wife either?' he answered rudely. 'Look to thy own business and meddle not with mine.'

"Simi's face grew red with anger, but he spoke quietly and reproved his brother-in-law for his rude speech. 'Why insult me needlessly before so many strangers?' he said. 'What harm have I or my wife Luisa ever done to thee?'

"'Curse thee and Luisa, thy wife,' said Karta again; 'she and thee, aye, and Serena too, are well matched, for ye be all cunning sneaks and fit company for that fat-faced Samoan psalm-singer who stands beside thee.'

"At these words the three beachcombers laughed, and when they saw that Simi made no answer, but turned aside from Karta in contempt, one of them called him a coward.

"He turned upon him quickly. 'Thou liest, thou drunken, useless cumberer of the earth,' he said, looking at him scornfully; 'no coward am I, nor a noisy boaster like thee. This is no place for us to quarrel. But say such a thing to me on the beach if ye dare.'

"'He is my friend/ said Karta, speaking with drunken rage, and thrusting his face into Simi's, 'he is as good a man as thee any day. To strike him or any one of us thou art afraid, thou cat-hearted coward and miser.'

"Simi clenched his hands, but suddenly thrust them into his pockets and looked at the captain and the officers of the ship.

"'This is no place for me,' he again said in a low voice; 'come, Tavita, let us go,' and without even raising his eyes to Karta and the three other men he went out of the cabin.

"That night he, Luisa, and I and my wife sat talking; and in the fulness of her anger at the insults heaped upon her husband, Luisa told us of some things.

"'This man Karta hateth both my sister and myself, as well as my husband. He hateth me because that it was I whom he desired to marry, four years ago; but I feared him too much to become his wife, for even in those days I knew him to be a drunkard and a gambler, and a licentious man. Then although she loved him not my sister Serena became his wife, for he was a man of good property, and promised to give over his evil ways and be a good husband to her. And he hateth her and would gladly see her dead, for she hath borne him no children. He is for ever flinging cruel words at her, and hath said to her before me that a childless man is a thing of scorn and disgrace even to the savage people of this island. And he makes no secret of his wickedness with other women. That is why my sister Serena is dull and heavy-minded; for she is eaten up with grief and shame.'

"'That is true,' said Simi, 'I have known this for a year past, for when he is drunk he cannot conceal his thoughts. And he is full of anger against me because I have nought in common with him. I am neither a drinker of grog nor a gambler, and have suffered from him what I would suffer from no other man. I am no brawler, but yet 'tis hard to bear.'

"Just as dawn came, and I was sunk in slumber, I heard a footstep outside my door, and then Simi called to me. 'Bring thy wife to my house quickly,' he said, 'evil work hath been done in the night.'

"My wife and I followed him, and when we entered we saw Luisa his wife kneeling beside a couch and weeping over Serena, who lay still and quiet as if dead.

"'Look,' he said sternly, 'look what that devil hath done!'

"He lifted Serena's left arm—the bone was broken in two places, above and below the elbow.

"We set to work quickly, and fitting the broken bones in place we bound her arm up in stiff, smooth strips of the spathe of the cocoanut tree, and then washed and dressed her feet, which were cut and bleeding, for she had walked barefooted, and clothed only in her night-dress, all the way from the north end of the island, which is nearly two leagues from my house.

"After she had drunk some coffee and eaten a little food she became stronger, and told us all that had befallen her.

"Karta and the three other white men came back from the ship when it was long past midnight, and I knew by the noise they made that they had all been drinking grog. I heard them talking and laughing and saying that thou, Simi, were a paltry coward; and then one of them—he who is called Joe—said that he would one day end thee with a bullet and take Luisa to wife, as so fine a woman deserved a better man than a cur for a husband. And Karta—Karta my husband—laughed and said that that could not be, for he meant to take thee, Luisa, for himself when he had ridden himself of me. His shameless words stung me, and I wept silently as I lay there, and pressed my hands to my ears to shut out their foul talk and blasphemies.

"Suddenly I heard my husband's voice as he rose from the table and came towards the sleeping room. He threw open the door and bade me come out and put food before him and his friends.

"I rose at his bidding, for his face terrified me—it was the face of a devil—and began to clothe myself. He tore the dress from my hands and cursed me, and bade me go as I stood. In my fear I sprang to the window and tried to tear down the cane lattice-work so as to escape from the house and the shame he sought to put upon me. He seized me by the waist and tried to tear me away, but I was strong—strong with the strength of a man. Then it was that he went mad, for he took up a heavy *paua* stick and struck me twice on the arm. And had it not been that the other white men came in and dragged him away from me, crying shame on him, and throwing him down upon the floor, I would now be dead.

"I lay quiet for a little time and then rising to my feet looked out into the big room, where the three men were still holding my husband down. One of them bade me run for my life, for Karta, he said, had gone mad with grog.

"I feared to seek aid from any of the natives, for they, too, dread Karta at such times; so I walked and ran, sometimes along the beach, sometimes through the bush till I came here. That is all.'

"That morning the head man in our village caused the shell to sound, {*} to call the people together so that they might hear from Simi the story of the shame put upon his wife's sister and upon himself and his house. As the people gathered around the *moniēp*{**} and the head men sat down inside, the captain of the ship came on shore, and great was his anger when he heard the tale.

* *A conch-shell.*

** *The council house.*

"Let this poor woman come to my ship,' he said; 'her life here is not safe with such a man as that. For I know his utter vileness and cruelty to her. With me she shall be safe and well cared for, and if she so wishes she shall come with me to Fiji where my wife liveth, and her life will be a life of peace.'

"So Serena was put in the ship's boat, and Luisa went with her to remain on board till the ship sailed, which would be in three days. Then Simi and the head men talked together in the council house, and they made a law and sent a message to Karta. This was the message they sent to him: 'Because of the evil thou hast done and of the shame thou hast put upon the sister of the wife of our white man, come no more to this town. If thou comest then will there be war between thy town and ours, and we will burn the houses and harry and slay thee and the seven other white men, and all men of thy town who side with thee, and make slaves of the women and children. This is our last word.'

"A swift messenger was sent. Before the sun was in mid-heaven he returned, crying out as he ran, 'War is the answer of Karta and his village. War and death to Simi and to us all are his words; and to Luisa, the wife of the white man, he sendeth this message: "Prepare a feast for thy new husband, for he cometh to take thee away from one who cannot stand against him."' "

"In those days there were seven hundred fighting men in our town, and a great clamour arose. Spears and clubs and muskets and hatchets were seized, the armour of stout cinnet which covered a man from head to foot was put on, women filled baskets with smooth stones for the slings; and long before sundown the warriors set out, with Simi and the head men leading them, to meet their enemies mid-way—at this very place where we now sit. For this narrow strip of land hath been the fighting-ground of Peru from the old, old times long before I was born, and my years are three score and seven.

"The night was dark, but Simi and his people, when they reached this place, some by land and some in canoes, lit great fires on the beach and dug trenches in the sand very quickly, behind which all those who carried muskets were placed, to fire into the enemy's canoes as they paddled along the narrow passage to the landing place. Karta and his white friends and the people of their town had more than two hundred muskets, whilst our village had less than fifty. But they were strong of heart and waited eagerly for the fight.

"Just before sunrise we saw them coming. There were over one hundred canoes, each carrying five or six men. Karta and the beachcombers were leading in a whaleboat, which was being rowed very swiftly. When within rifle-shot she grounded.

"As they leapt out of the boat, rifles in hand, they were followed by their natives, but our people fired a volley together, and two of the white men and many of their people fell dead in the shallow water. Then Simi and twenty of our best men leapt out of their trenches and dashed into the water to meet them. Karta was in advance of them all, and when he saw Simi he raised his rifle and fired. The bullet missed the white man but killed a native behind him. Then Karta, throwing away his rifle, took two pistols from his belt and shot twice at Simi who was now quite close to him. These bullets, too, did Simi no harm, for taking a steady aim at his foe he shot him through the body, and as Karta fell upon his side one of our people leapt on him and held his head under the water till there was no more life in his wicked heart.

"The fight was soon ended, for seeing three of their number killed so quickly, the rest of the white men ran back to their boat and tried to float her again; and then Simi, taking a shot-gun loaded with slugs from one of his men, ran up to them and shot dead the one named Joe. The other white men he let escape, for all their followers were now paddling off or swimming to the other side of the lagoon, and Simi was no lover of bloodshed.

"That day the people at the north end sent a message for peace, and peace was made, for our people had lost but one man killed, so the thing was ended well for us.

"Serena came back from the ship, for now that Karta was dead she had no fear. The three white men who were spared soon left Peru in a whale-ship, for they feared to remain.

"Simi and his wife and children and Serena did not long stay with us, for he sold his house and boats to a new trader who came to the island about a month after the fight, and they went away to live at a place in Fiji called Yasawa. They were very good to me and mine, and I was sore in my heart to see the ship sail away with them, and at night I felt very lonely for a long time, knowing that I should see them no more."

THE BRASS GUN OF THE BUCCANEERS

Challoner was a trader at Jakoits Harbour in Ponapé, one of the loveliest of the great Caroline Archipelago in the North Pacific. He was a quiet but determined-looking man of fifty, and at the time of this story had been living on Ponapé for over five years. Unlike the generality of the white men who were settled on the island, he never carried arms and never entered into any of the disputes that too often occurred among them and ended in bloodshed.

Many of his neighbours were scoundrels and ruffians of the deepest dye—deserters from whale-ships and men-of-war, or escaped criminals from California and the Australian colonies. Some of these earned a living by trading with the natives for turtle-shell and cocoanut oil, others were simply beachcombers, who attached themselves to the leading chiefs and gave their services to them in war time, receiving in return houses and land, and spending their lives in time of peace in the wildest dissipation and excesses.

In those days the American whaling fleet made Jakoits and the other three harbours on the beautiful island their rendezvous before sailing northward to the coasts of Japan and Siberia. Sometimes there would be as many as thirty ships arrive within a week of each other, carrying from thirty to forty hands each; and these, when given liberty by their captains, at once associated with the beachcombing element, and turned an island paradise into a hell during their stay on shore.

There was among these beachcombers a man named Larmer. He was of Herculean stature and strength, and was, in a manner, their leader. It was his habit in his drunken moments to vaunt of the bloody deeds which he had perpetrated during his crime-stained career in the Pacific Islands. For the lives of natives he had absolutely no regard, and had committed so many murders in the Gilbert Islands that he had been forcibly taken on board a whaler by the few white men living there, and threatened with instant death if he returned.

The whaleship landed him on Ponapé, and his presence soon became a curse. Being possessed of plenty of arms and ammunition, he soon gained the friendship of a native chief ruling over the western district of the island, and his savage nature at once showed itself by his offering to destroy the inhabitants of a little island named Pàkin, who had in some way offended this chief. His offer was accepted, and, accompanied by five ruffianly whites and some hundreds of natives, the unfortunate people were surprised and butchered. Elated with this achievement, Larmer returned to Ponapé, and, during the orgy which took place to celebrate the massacre, he shot dead one of his white companions who had displeased him over some trifling matter.

The news was brought by a native to Challoner, who with a fellow-trader and several local chiefs was sitting outside his house smoking and enjoying the cool of the evening, and watching the flashing torches of a number of canoes catching flying fish beyond the barrier reef. Neither of them felt surprised, and Challoner remarked to the native that it was good to know that one bad and useless man was dead, but that it would be better still to hear that the man who slaughtered a whole community in cold blood was dead also.

"I wouldn't have said that if I were you," said Dawson, the other trader, nervously; "that fellow Larmer is bound to hear of it."

"I am quite prepared," Challoner replied quietly, "as you know, Dawson. Things cannot go on like this. I have never killed a man in my life, but to kill such a brute as Larmer would be a good action."

The distance between Challoner's place and Kiti, where Larmer dwelt with his villainous associates, was but ten miles. Yet, although Larmer had now been living on the island for a year, Challoner had only once met and spoken to him.

During a visit which he (Challoner) had made to a little harbour called Metalanim, he had explored some very ancient ruins there, which were generally believed by the white uneducated traders to have been constructed by the old buccaneers, though the most learned antiquarians confess themselves puzzled to solve the mystery of their existence. But that these ruins had been used as a *depot* or refuge of some sort by those who sailed the North Pacific more than two hundred years ago was evident, for many traces of their occupancy by Europeans had been found by the few white men who had visited them.

It was Challoner's fortune to discover amid the mass of tangled vines and creepers that grew all over the walls, and even down in the curious chambers, an old brass cannon. With the aid of some of his native friends he succeeded in dragging it forth and conveying it in his boat to his house, where, upon cleaning it, he found it bore the Spanish arms over the date of its casting in Manila, in the year 1716. Much interested in this, he refused to sell the gun to several whaleship captains, who each wanted to buy it. He would sell it, he thought, to better advantage by sending it to Australia or Europe.

Soon after its discovery he had set his people to work to clean and polish it. One day he saw coming towards him a man, who from his huge figure he knew must be Larmer, the beachcomber.

"I say, boss," said the man roughly, "let's have a look at that cannon you've found, will yar?"

"There it is," said Challoner quietly, pointing to his boat-house, but not deigning to accompany the beachcomber and show him the weapon.

Larmer made a brief but keen inspection, and then walked into the trader's room and, unasked, sat down.

"It's as good as new," he said. "What do you want for it?"

"I will not sell it," replied the trader coldly, eyeing the beachcomber steadily, "at least to no one in Ponapé. There is too free a display of and use of arms here as it is," and he looked pointedly at the brace of heavy Colt's revolvers in his visitor's belt.

A scowl darkened Larmer's face. "I'll give you a hundred dollars for the thing," he said. "I want it, and I mean to have it." And he rose and dashed his huge hand down upon the table.

Challoner was unarmed, but his face betrayed neither fear nor any other emotion. He was standing with his back to the doorway of his bedroom. A thick curtain of navy blue calico concealed the interior of this room

from the view of any one in the living room, and Larmer had seen no one but the trader about.

For some few seconds there was silence; the beachcomber, with his clenched fist still on the table, was trying to discover whether the man before him was intimidated. Challoner stood unmoved.

"Yes," began Larmer again, "I want that cannon. Sru, the chief of Kiti, an' me is going on a little war-party again. But I'll pay you for it."

"And I tell you that I won't sell it. Least of all to a man like you, who would use it for murder."

The beachcomber's hand went to his belt—and stayed there, as the trader stepped aside from the doorway and he saw a rifle pointed at his heart. It was held by the trader's wife.

"Put up your hands," said Challoner, with a contemptuous laugh. "And now listen to me. I want no quarrel with you—don't force one on me. Now clear out."

Without a word the baffled man turned away. But the look of savage hatred that gleamed in his fierce eyes told Challoner that he had made a dangerous enemy. And only a few days passed before he heard from the natives that Larmer said he would have his revenge—and the brass gun as well—before many months were over.

But the trader, though apparently taking no heed, was yet watchful. His influence with the natives of the Jakoits district was great, for they both liked and trusted him as a just and honourable man, and he knew that they would rally round him if Larmer attempted either to carry off the gun or do harm to him.

For some months matters went on at Jakoits very quietly, and the last of the whaling fleet having sailed, Challoner and Dawson went about their usual work again, such as trading along the coast in their whaleboats and storing their cocoanut oil in readiness for the *Mocassin*, the trading ship which visited them once a year, and was now due.

Although living only a few miles apart from each other, the two did not very often meet, but Challoner was one day surprised to see Dawson's boat pulling into the beach, for he had had a visit from his friend only the previous evening. The moment the boat touched the sand Dawson jumped out, and Challoner at once saw by the anxious expression on his face that something was wrong.

He soon learnt Dawson's news, which was bad enough. The *Mocassin* had run ashore in the night at a place five miles away from Dawson's village, and it was feared she would become a total wreck unless she could be lightened and floated over the reef into smooth water. The captain had sent an urgent message for aid, and in less than half an hour the two men were on their way to the wreck, accompanied by nearly every male native in Challoner's village.

Towards sunset on the following day, just as the boats were in sight, returning from the wreck, Tiaru, the trader's wife, with her one child and some of her female relatives, were coming from their bathe in the sea, when they heard screams from the village, and presently some terrified women fled past them, calling out that Larmer and another white man and a number of their native allies were carrying away the brass gun. In an instant the young wife gave the babe to a woman near her, and darted towards her husband's house. A number of women and children, encouraged by her presence, ran to alarm the approaching boats.

In front of the trader's house Larmer and another beachcomber were directing a score of Kiti natives how to sling the heavy gun between two stout poles. A sentry stood on guard at the gate of Challoner's fence, but Tiaru dashed his crossed musket aside, and then sprang into the midst of her husband's enemies.

"Set down the gun," she panted indignantly, "ye coward men of Rôan Kiti, and ye white men thieves, who only dare to come and steal when there are but women to meet and fight with thee."

Larmer laughed.

"Get out o' this, you meddling fool," he said in English, and then, calling to the natives to hasten ere it grew dark, he took no further notice of the woman before him. Then, as they prepared to raise their burden by a united effort upon their naked shoulders, Tiaru sprang into the house and quickly reappeared with a heavy knife in her hand. Twisting her lithe body from the grasp of one of the beachcombers, with flaming eyes she burst in amongst the gun carriers and began slashing at the strips of green bark with which the cannon was lashed to the poles.

"Curse you!" said Larmer fiercely, striding forward and seizing her by her long hair. "Take away her knife, Watty, quick!" And he dragged her head back with brutal strength—to release his hold with a cry of savage fury as the woman turned upon him and with a swift stroke severed the fingers of his left hand. Again she raised her hand as Larmer drew a pistol and shot her through the body. She fell without a cry upon the gun beneath.

"By ———, you've done it now!" said the man

Watty. "Look there! There's all our natives running away. We're as good as dead men if we stay here five minutes longer. I'm off anyway"; and then, hurriedly binding up his companion's bleeding hand, he disappeared into the surrounding forest after his native allies.

For a few moments Larmer stood irresolute, looking first at the body of the woman lying across the gun, then at his wounded hand. Already the shouts of Challoner's natives sounded near, and he knew that the boats had reached the beach. The gun, which had cost him so dear, must be abandoned, but he would take a further revenge upon its owner. He ran quickly to a fire which burned dimly in Challoner's cooking-house, lit a bunch of dried palm leaves, and thrust it into the thatch of the dwelling-house. Then he struck into the jungle.

As Challoner, followed by Dawson and the men of Jakoits village, rushed along the narrow path that led to his house, they heard the roar and crackle of the flames; when they gained the open they saw the bright light shining on the old cannon, whose polished brass was stained and streaked with red. Tiaru lay across the breech, dead.

For nearly two days Challoner and his natives followed the tracks of the murderer into the heart of the mountain forest of Ponapé. Dawson and another party had left early the same night for the Rôan Kiti coast,

where they landed and formed a cordon, which it would be impossible for Larmer to pass.

Watty, his fellow-scoundrel, was captured early next morning. He had lost his way and was lying asleep beside a fire on the banks of a small stream.

He was promptly shot by Dawson. Larmer was to be taken alive.

Meanwhile Challoner and his men pressed steadily on, driving their prey before them. At noon on the second day they caught sight of his huge figure ascending a rocky spur, and a party of natives ran swiftly to its base and hid at the margin of a small, deep pool. Challoner knew that his man wanted a drink, and would soon descend the spur to get it.

For some hours not a sound broke the silence, then a stone rolled down, and presently Larmer's head appeared above a boulder. He looked carefully round, and then, finding all quiet, began the descent. On the very edge of the pool he again stopped and listened, holding his pistol at full cock. His left hand was slung to his chest by a piece of green hibiscus bark, which was passed round his neck and roughly tied.

The silence all around him was reassuring, but he still held out the pistol as he bent his knees to drink. Ere his lips could touch the water two half-naked figures sprang upon him and bore him down. He was too weak to resist.

"Do not bind him," said Challoner, "but tie his right hand behind his back."

Larmer turned his bloodshot eyes upon the trader, but said nothing.

"Give him a drink."

A native placed a gourd of water to his lips. He drank greedily. Then, in silence, Challoner and his men began their march back.

At sunset the people of Jakoits gathered together in front of the blackened space whereon the trader's house had stood. Raised on four heavy blocks of stone was the still blood-stained cannon, and bound with his back to its muzzle was Larmer.

Challoner made a sign, the brown-skinned men and women moved quickly apart in two parties, one on each side of the gun. Then Rul, the chief of the Jakoits* village, advanced with a lighted stick, touched the priming, and sprang aside. A sheet of flame leaped out, a bursting roar pealed through the leafy forest aisles, and Challoner had avenged his murdered wife.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BROTHERS-IN-LAW: A TALE OF THE EQUATORIAL ISLANDS; AND THE BRASS GUN OF THE BUCCANEERS ***

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